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SENSITIVE

STATE FOR EUR/AGS - VIKMANIS-KELLER

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [AEMR](#) [EAID](#) [PGOV](#) [XO](#) [AU](#)

SUBJECT: DEMARCHES TO AUSTRIA: USG CALL FOR DONOR SUPPORT TO TSUNAMI VICTIMS AND GOALS FOR JANUARY 11 UNOCHA TSUNAMI DONOR CONFERENCE

REF: A. (A) STATE 3792

[1](#)B. (B) STATE 959

[1](#)C. (C) 04 VIENNA 4455 AND PREVIOUS

This message is Sensitive but Unclassified. Please handle accordingly.

[1](#)1. (U) The Ambassador presented refs (a) and (b) demarches on January 7 to Foreign Ministry Secretary General (Deputy Secretary equivalent) Johannes Kyrle. Kyrle broke out of a

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tsunami strategy meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs,

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Interior and Defense in order to see the Ambassador. Foreign Minister Plassnik was going to leave momentarily for an EU meeting in Brussels on the topic. On the January 11 meeting in Geneva, the Ambassador reviewed ref (a) points outlining key U.S. goals for the meeting.

Austrian Relief Contributions

[1](#)2. (U) Kyrle listed the following contributions to disaster relief and reconstruction:

-- The Austrian federal government's pledge of eight million euros "was doubled" by the state governments. (Note: In addition, Austrian private sector contributions total some 18 million euros. End note.)

-- An Austrian military contingent has deployed to Sri Lanka, and has taken up contact with the U.S. forces in Galle. The Austrian unit, from the NBC (nuclear, biological and chemical warfare unit), will provide water purification systems which can serve some 40,000 people per day. The unit will remain four to six weeks, with a possibility of prolonging the mission, if needed. There are also demining experts in the Austrian contingent from the Austrian demining school in Klosterneuburg, Lower Austria. The Austrian military contingent also includes logistics experts, at the request of the UN. Kyrle said the Austrians have been asked to name a liaison officer to the U.S. forces in Sri Lanka.

-- As one of six net payers in the EU, Austria is responsible for part of any EU contribution.

Austrian Casualties

[1](#)3. (U) The Austrian MFA estimates that there were 5,296 Austrians in the affected region. The MFA confirmed the welfare of some 4,800 in the first week after the disaster. Some 480 remain missing, of which 300 were in Thailand and Sri Lanka. In Thailand, the Austrians think there were heavy Austrian casualties in two hotels, the Sofitel and the Sea View, which catered mainly to Austrians, Germans and Swedes.

[1](#)4. (U) The Austrian government has repatriated all the Austrians who wanted to come back. This included 70 injured, some of whom required medical attention on the aircraft. Kyrle mentioned that Austria used Austrian Airlines (AUA) planes for transport, outfitting them with medical teams and equipment to permit even surgery to occur during the flight. For the time being, only two injured Austrians remain in Bangkok hospitals, and Austrian doctors are present to give them clearance to travel back to Austria.

EU Consular Coordination (or lack thereof)

[1](#)5. (SBU) The normally placid Kyrle complained in rather bitter terms about the lack of consular coordination among EU member states in the immediate aftermath of the disaster.

Austria pressed hard for mutual consular assistance among EU states after the disaster struck, but met very little success. Only Sweden and Germany were "somewhat positive," while others, especially the UK, objected. The result was that Austria, with diplomatic representation only in Bangkok, Delhi, Kuala Lumpur and Jakarta, had to send 200 officers to the region. Kyrle said the EU itself, which has its own representation in the region, did not even reply to Austrian requests for assistance until a full week after the disaster. The EU representation in Bangkok, with a staff of 85 people and an Austrian at its head, had no orders to intervene on behalf of any member state, Kyrle said. The draft EU constitution speaks of mutual assistance in the development of a common EU foreign service, and the Austrians had always touted EU membership as an opportunity to get assistance in such disasters. However, in the event, "each EU member was on its own," he said. The most direct contacts Austria had were with Switzerland -- not even an EU member.

16. (SBU) Foreign Minister Plassnik was going to make this a primary topic in the January 7 meeting in Brussels, Kyrle promised.

January 11 Meeting in Geneva

17. (U) Austria would "of course" send people to the January 11 meeting in Geneva, although Kyrle was not prepared to announce names. Kyrle said that the Austrian government would meet again on Sunday, January 9, to take stock of Austria's position.
Brown